Surah al Qalam [the Pen] - Abdul Nasir Jangda

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Introduction:

There are almost 7 divisions in the entire Copy [Mus-haf] of the Qur'an according to Theme. The final of these 7 sections starts from surah Mulk [surah number 67] to surah an-Naas [surah number 114].

This final part [last 7th of the Quran] focuses on; **sources of Reflection, People, their final scenes they will face on Judgment Day and Hellfire and Paradise.**

Surprisingly, even though it is the final part of Qur'an - it was revealed the earliest in Makkah.
It is spiritual and focused on the basic and foundation beliefs required to be a true believer.

Similarities between this surah al Qalam, and the previous surah al Mulk:

1 - Surah Mulk tells us how to appreciate Allah's blessings, and how to believe in Him.

Surah al Qalam is the pair of surah al Mulk. Some scholars even said that it is like a mirror of it.

If surah Mulk focused on believing in Allah, this surah Qalam focuses on believing in His Messenger, Muhammad (sal Allah alayhi wasalam).

2 - Surah al Mulk tells us to believe in Allah, and if you don't - then here are the consequences (hellfire).
Surah al Qalam tells us to believe in Prophet Muhammad, and if you don't - here are the consequences (hellfire.)

This is why the surah begins with Qalam (the Pen) and yaSTuRoon - that which they are Writing out.

So it's talking about **Knowledge**. Allah's Messenger would recieve the Qur'an and his companions would write [transcribe] it down.

So it's very appropriate in the role of the deliverance of the message.

Their is a smooth connection and Coherence between surah Mulk and Qalam:

Surah Mulk 79:29 - Qul huwwa ar-Rahman, aamannaa bihee wa 'alayhi tawakalnaa fa sa ta'lamoona man huwwa fee Dalaalin mubeen - say He is the Most merciful, we believe in Him and upon Him alone we have put our trust, so soon you will know who was in clear error.

Surah Qalam 68:7 - most definitely your Master who knows who is astray and He is well informed who are rightly guided.

So surah Mulk mentioned how there are two parties; believers and disbelievers, and this surah Qalam discusses that Allah fully knows who are astray and He knows who are the rightly guided.

Themes and Structure of surah Qalam:

1 - Similar to surah Mulk, except that **surah Qalam is sharper in it's tone.**

2 - Surah Mulk was 30 aayaat. Surah Qalam is 52 aayaat. So **this surah is more longer and detailed in describing the consequences of the peoples actions.**

3 - Surah Mulk focuses on believing in Allah, which is obvious and easy on human nature.
However, **surah Qalam focuses on believing in Prophet Muhammad as Allah's Messenger, which requires more detail and requires more warnings of the consequences of disbelief in him.**

Even hadeeth rejectors reject the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad, and the disbelievers do too. Why? Because submitting to another human is hard for humans.
Allah is telling us that Prophet Muhammad speaks on Allah's behalf.

4 - surah Mulk ended with;

Say (O Muhammad), if Allah destroyed me and those with me or had mercy on us, then who would save the disbelievers from a painful punishment?

The disbelievers are being told that even if the Messenger who is warning you of Judgment Day was to die, who would save you disbelievers from Allah's punishment (for your evil actions of this life?).

Surah Qalam is going to show us that the tactics the disbelievers use is to discredit/character assasinate this person, so the other humans will already not take the Messenger seriously. The general people will already get a biased image of the character they are going to see.

This technique of Character Assasination has been used throughout history,

especially by the corrupt and those who control the media.

The disbelievers secretly heard the Qur'an and were amazed by it. So they could not discredit it, so their next resort was to use the method of character assasination.

However, the praise is for Allah - this was difficult for these people because Prophet Muhammad was the most honorable and noble man with the greatest character, and so they had to resort to lies against him.

<u>The disbelievers claimed Prophet Muhammad was</u>;

1 - <u>Crazy/mad/insane:</u>
They found this a useful tool. They would argue, how can you believe someone who says that you will come back to life after your bones have decomposed in the ground, and then after coming back to life - you be judged and face consequences for your actions you did in this world?

They would tell people that a person with such beliefs is Insane, so you should not listen to him.

2 - <u>Corrupt:</u>
They would say that he is corrupt because he is causing separation between the father and his son, man from wife etc. So you should not approach this man because he may cause you problems between you and your people.

So in this surah, Allah refutes both these claims (especially in the beginning aayaat/verses of the surah).

Look at the character of this man, look at and listen to the revelation he is reciting to you.

Now compare it to the corruption of the rulers you have.

..fa sa Tubsiru wa Yubsiroon, bi ayyikum-ul maFtoon - so soon you will see, and they will see, who is really affected (by insanity etc.)

Soon people will find out the truthfulness of this message, it will be exposed to them and the corruption of the leaders will also be exposed.
Then people will know who truly is insane.

It just takes abit of Fitrah (common sense/Natural disposition) and people will realise this.

<u>This surah is split into 3 parts</u>:

<u>1st part</u> - Defending the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad (sal Allah alayhi wasalam). If you don't believe in him, then don't - but do not insult or harm Prophet Muhammad.

<u>2nd part</u> - **The companions of the Garden [aS-haab al Jannah].**

Allah gives us an example: Imagine there were people who have all wealth they desired (i.e. Garden full of all fruits). They took these blessings for granted and did not thank Allah for them, nor did they use these blessings to help the poor and weak.
So Allah removed all these blessings from them suddenly within one night.

That is the example given in this surah which we will discuss as it comes insha' Allah.

Quraysh is a powerful tribe who have all sorts of wealth, however - they abuse this and harm the poor believers. Isn't Allah able to make the rich and powerful Quraysh into poor people if He wills?

Realise your way before it's too late.

<u>3rd part</u>: **Harshly rebuking those who deny life after death.**

The disbelievers would say that - if hypothetically there is a life in the next world. What is preventing us from being in power in the next world, just as we are in power in this world?

a - <u>Response</u>: Do you think that Allah is so unjust that He cannot see the difference between the one who is right (and submits to Him) and the one who is wrong (disbelieves in His signs)?

b - Allah challenges the disbelievers that if there is no next life, or that the disbelievers will be successful in the next life, then produce your evidence or proof that this is true.

c - the surah begins with Allah defending His Messenger, and then ends with consoling him (sal Allah alayhi wasalam.)

This is the true beauty of the surah. It is very powerful - especially when Allah defends and consoles His Messenger.
These are amazing aayaat because it shows the high rank of Prophet Muhammad in the sight of Allah, and how sensitive Allah is in regard to him.

So Allah ends the surah by telling Prophet Muhammad that you should not be offended by their insults, so be patient - they will face the punishment on Judgment Day.

Another consolation from Allah to Prophet Muhammad is;

And do not rush (don't become impatient). Why? Because there was another Messenger - Prophet Yunus (Jonah) - the companion of the Whale (saahib-il Hoot). He became a little bit impatient for the help of Allah to arrive/he rushed a little bit. So Allah put him through some training.

Yunus was very patient, but just a little more patience will give you success.

Ayah 1:

ن ۚ وَالْقَلَمِ وَمَا يَسْطُرُونَ

NuuN, wa-l Qalami wa maa yasTuroon

Nun. By the pen and what they inscribe,

Nuun (letter **N** in the arabic language).

These are the Disjointed letters (i.e. you recite them as individual letters).

There are 29 places in the Qur'an at the beginning of each surah, which have these Disjointed letters recited at their Beginning.

Below are some examples;

1 Letter: Qaf (surah Qaf), Nuun (surah Qalam), Saad (surah Saad), Nuun (surah Qalam) etc.

2 Letters: Ya Seen (surah Ya Seen), Ta Ha (surah Ta Ha), Ha Meem (surah Fussilat) etc.

3 Letters: Alif Lam Meem (surah al-Baqarah), Alif Lam Ra (surah Yusuf) etc.

4 letters: Alif Lam Meem Saad (surah al A'raf)

5 Letters: Kaaf Haa Yaa Ayn Saad (surah Maryam), Ha Meem Ayn Seen Qaaf.

This is the largest amount.

In 'Ulum al Qur'an (sciences/knowledges of the Quran) these are called:

al ***Huroof al MuQata'aat*** **[the Disjointed Letters].**

These are letters that are to be read and recited individually.

What do these Letters mean?

The meaning of these letters has not been clearly explained by Allah in the Qur'an or authentically from Prophet Muhammad (sal Allah alayhi wasalam).

However, some Companions of Prophet Muhammad (sal Allahu alayhi wasalam) held some views regarding these letters, aswell as some of the Salaf and scholars:

The opinions mentioned may not necessarily be authentic and may have weaknesses;

- NUUN [N] =

1 - Some Sahaba and scholars stated that because the letter **Nuun is next to the word Qalam [Pen] in this ayah, Nuun may refer to the Inkpot.**

2 - Others said; **Lawh (Tablet) - that which is written on.**

3 - some said that **Prophet Yunus** is mentioned in this surah later on, and he is called Dhun-NUUN [surah Anbiya 21:87] in other parts of the Qur'an. So it may be that NUUN is referring to Prophet Yunus.

However, none of these opinions have been accepted by the vast majority of the scholars of Tafseer, Hadeeth and others. Along with the fact that most of these may not be authentic narrations.

So what do these Disjointed Letters mean?

Answer: **We really don't know what these Letters mean.**

Conclusion: I**f we don't know what these Letters mean, it means that we have to humble ourselves due to our lack of knowledge/understanding as humans.**

Allah has mentioned the Qalam (Pen) next to this statement - NUUN - which we don't understand. So even though the Pen represents knowledge, **we humans' still do not know ALL knowledge.**

wa maa yaSTuRoon - and what they Write out ([write] complete lines = SaTR)

This could be used:
wa maa yaKTuBoon - and what they Write.

However, ***yaSTuRoon*** **has a more stronger meaning of 'Complete Lines' (being written) - which shows a sign of more intellect.**

So when Allah says - Nuun - we feel humble because we realise that we do not understand meanings of Letters from the exact same alphabet which we use in our day to day lives.

These words are also part of the I'jaaz [miracle] of the Qur'an - the Linguistic Miracle of the Qur'an.

Why? Many scholars say that This is the 2nd surah which was revealed after the first revealed surah 'Alaq (96).

So the 2nd surah which was revealed to Prophet Muhammad is already **challenging the polytheists of the Quraysh - that you know what the letter 'Nuun' is, you use it in your speech, but you do not know it's full meaning, you do not know everything of what you claim to be experts on.**

Imagine someone said a Letter from an Alphabet to you out loud in a loud and extended tone, then suddenly paused. You would be confused, look at that person and wait to see what he is going to say next.

Then the words which come next are so powerful and deep, that it shakes you to the core.

So we see that the useage of the Disconnected Letters has a strong purpose.

<u>The Pattern that we see with these letters can be seen as below</u>:

There are 29 surahs which have Disconnected Letters on their beginning.

24 of these surahs immediately have a mention of the Kitab [Book]/Quran straight after these Letters.

The other 5 surahs which do not mention Kitab or Quran after the Disconnected Letters include;
- surah Maryam,
- surah al Ankabut,
- surah al-Ruum,
- surah al-Shura
- Surah Qalam

1 - The first thing is that even though the word Kitab or Quran is not said, there is always an implicit reference to the Qur'an.

I.e.
- Surah Maryam - a Mercy is mentioned. The greatest Mercy for mankind, especially this Ummah is the Qur'an.

- surah al-Ankabut - People are Tested. How? Through how much they will obey the Qur'an and stay firm upon that.

- surah ar-Ruum - the beginning of the surah is a Prophecy, a miracle. Prophecising that the Romans will be defeated within 3 - 9 years. And this did occur. Another miracle was that the Muslims will rejoice on that day (when the Romans win.) and they did - because that was the day the Muslims won Badr!

- surah Shura - this is that what was revealed to you (O Muhammad) and those before you - i.e. the teachings in the Qur'an.

- surah Qalam - the Pen is referring to the best of knowledge - the Qur'an.

2 - All 29 surahs' towards their END talk about the Qur'an.

i.e. See surah al Baqarah - aaamanna ar-Rasoolu bi maa uNzila ilayhi.. (we believe in the Messenger and what has been sent Down to him [the Quran])..

3 - a Literary Perspective -

If 24 out of 29 surahs are continuously mentioning the Book/Kitab or the Quran straight after these letters. Then just when we hear these letters - straightaway we remember a reminder of the Book or the Qur'an.

This is the End of part 1 surah Qalam alHamdulillah, we will continue the Linguistic definitions of the words of this surah in part 2 insha' Allah.